LOADSTAR LETTER #13

August 1994 Companion newsletter for LOADSTAR #123

"Real News! No O.J. Simpson!"

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Jay Miner, "Father Of The Amiga," Variable Pacemakers, Atari 800, Dies

Jay Miner passed away June 20, 1994, at the El Camino Hospital in Mountain View. The cause of death was heart failure as a result of kidney complications. A private memorial service was held in July.

This story wasn't carried on the wires or in Newsbytes or on CNN. When Commodore people die, it's not a mainstream story -- even when his genius has also improved the quality of life of cardiac patients around the world. GEnie's Viewport editor, Jim Meyer said of Miner, "Jay was just a helluva guy who always had the time to talk to anybody and everybody. And he never seemed to be overly aware of his status as Amiga royalty."

D.JARVIS5 of GEnie wrote of him, "Jay was not only the father of the Amiga, he was the father of some very innovative medical technology, such as heart pacemakers that could be set for different rates, giving the people the freedom to engage in more activities without getting winded and dizzy. Programmable pacemakers are the standard now, due to Jay Miner and people like him who had a love for other people that stretched into as many areas as his creative heart reached out to."

B.BISHOP5 wrote, "We WILL miss him. God is going to have one heck of a computer now..."

Rumor has it that the demise of Commodore Business Machines didn't help Jay's chronic ailing health. Miner was outspoken in his dislike of Commodore's business practices. In an interview in Pasadena, September 1992 he said, "You know, Commodore actually gave me one [Amiga 4000] today at the show - the first time I ever got anything out of them!"

Now Defunct-Commodore's Bahamian Creditors Gather to Do Battle

Philadelphia Inquirer Knight-Ridder/Tribune Business News.

NASSAU, Bahamas--Jul. 19--Le Meridien, a graceful resort hotel on fashionable Cable Beach, hardly seems a spot for a fight. It is a place of manicured lawns, swaying palms, sandy beaches and emerald water. Travelers normally come here for the relaxing pleasures of the tropics and fine dining at the hotel's gourmet restaurant.

But suddenly on Friday amidst the usual gathering of sun-tanned women in bikinis and men in shorts appeared a small army of two dozen lawyers, mostly men in dark suits bearing overstuffed briefcases.

They came to do battle over the carcass of Commodore International Ltd., the once mighty maker of small computers which had its North American headquarters in West Chester. They came for the first official meeting of Commodore's Bahamian committee of creditors.

It is a fight over the company's assets, over the future of its technology, over how much of its $145 million in debt will be paid and, not surprisingly when lawyers get together, over legal jurdisdiction.

Commodore, whose stock was traded on the New York Stock Exchange until May 2, was registered in the Bahamas, and the company initiated its own liquidation in the Bahamian Supreme Court.

The court-appointed Bahamian liquidators so far have received at least four proposals to buy Commodore, including one from the management team o its subsidiary in the United Kingdom, the only one of the company's units still profitable when the firm went out of business

The other suitors are Amstrad Plc., a U.K. computer firm; Philips Electronics of the Netherlands, and Samsung Electronics of Korea.

But before there is a sale, lawyers for Commodore's principal creditors would like to have the bankruptcy proceedings moved or at least have parallel proceedings opened in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in New York.

"The biggest problem we are having is that the Americans don't trust the Bahamians to do the liquidation," said Paul L. Adderly, the attorney for the two liquidators.

"What can you do about that?" asked Adderly in exasperation. "We are not entirely ignorant of these matters in the Bahamas."

But lawyers for the main creditors see things differently. It is not just the competence of the Bahamians they have called into question, but the efficacy of Bahamian law.

Under Bahamian law, a creditors' committee has an advisory role, while under U.S. law, the creditors would have more of a say over final disposition of the assets.

Also, Bahamian law permits the liquidators to go back and judge, and possibly reverse, management actions involving assets three months before bankruptcy was declared. American law permits a year.

So far, the Bahamian court has rejected motions from the creditors to have the proceedings moved to New York.

Meanwhile, the creditors are seeking a ruling in U.S. Bankruptcy Court in the Southern District of New York to seize jurdisdiction or at least open parallel proceedings.

The principal opposing creditors are Prudential Insurance Co. of America, and a subsidiary, Pruco Life Insurance Co., both of Newark, N.J., which are owed a total of $28 million; Anchor National Life Insurance Co. of Los Angeles, owed $5 million, and Daewoo Telecom and Daewoo Corp. of Korea, owed $15 million.

The creditors have questions about actions taken by the Commodore management team shortly before and right after the liquidation filing in the Bahamas on May 2.

They want to challenge management's transfer of a Commodore unit from one subsidiary to another, and they have questions about the conduct of Commodore's former president, Mehdi R. Ali.

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LOADSTAR LETTER contacts: INTERNET: LOADSTAR@GENIE.GEIS.COM GEnie: LOADSTAR US MAIL: ATTN Jeff Jones, Softdisk Publishing P.O. Box 30008, Shreveport, LA 71130-0008 318/221-8718. Fax 318/221-8870.

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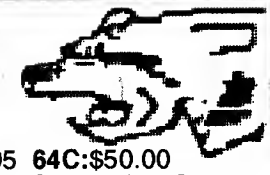

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Ali tried to get Prudential and Daewoo to agree to allow liquidation proceedings to go unchallenged in the Bahamas in return for a vague promise that they would get 50 cents on every dollar of debt.

According to an affidavit filed in the Bahamian Supreme Court by Stephen M. Richmond, an attorney representing the creditors' committee, Ali claimed he had a foreign buyer for the company and the sale would proceed quickly if there was not a legal tangle in New York.

Richmond, a gruff Boston-based lawyer, said Ali refused to tell him who the potential purchaser was or what the terms of the sale were.

Ali is no longer associated with Commodore. Reached Monday by telephone at his home in Ridgefield, Conn., and asked for comment, Ali shouted, "You're intruding on my home. I'll complain to your editor. You're an idiot." He then hung up.

The Bahamian court-appointed liquidators are Franklyn Wilson and McGregor Robertson, two partners in the Bahamian offices of Deloitte & Touche, a major accounting firm.

Wilson said Monday he hoped to complete the sale of Commodore's assets "very quickly," but he declined to be more specific.

Amid all the men in dark suits last week was a bearded, casually dressed British national, David Pleasance, managing director of Commodore's U.K. subsidiary and a leader of the management team trying to buy all of the company.

"We might as well try. We have a good business in the U.K., a very good business," said Pleasance, who came to the Bahamas to get to know the company's major creditors.

If the management buyout is successful, Pleasance said operations would be moved to England, but that the company would like to keep research and development facilities in Norristown.

"These are very good people," Pleasance said. "We would like to keep them." Transmitted: 94-07-19 03:24:17 EDT Dan Stets.

Study Claims Poor Children Benefit From Exposure To Computers And Telecommunication

07/01/94 NEW YORK, NEW YORK, U.S.A., 1994 JUL 1 (NB) -- In studies funded in part by NYNEX and Merrill Lynch, researchers at the City University of New York have shown that at-risk students can benefit a lot from access to modem-equipped PCs.

The study was a three-year project by The CUNY Graduate School's Stanton/Heiskell Center for Public Policy in Telecommunications.

"The story of Project Tell is not about computers," insisted Helen Birenbaum, director of the Stanton/Heiskell Center in a press statement. "It is about finding ways of leveling the technological playing field in ways that provide the greatest social and educational benefit to students."

The project, funded by a $3.5 million grant from NYNEX, provided a group of sixth-grade students in New York City Public Schools, who had been identified as at-risk of dropping out, with access to computers and information systems both at home and at school while offering training and support throughout the process.

Students received computers and network information systems in their homes. All who successfully remained in the program were able to keep the computers. The project also provided support and training for teachers in their efforts to learn to use computers with telecommunications capacity and to integrate their use in the classroom. As a third component of the project, NYNEX's Voice Messaging service was introduced at PS 75 in Manhattan.

Birenbaum discussed the study with Newsbytes. "There have not been enough studies on kids who are academically at risk of failure. You find them in cities and the country. What we wanted to do was work with these students, who might not have graduated high school otherwise or drop out."

Birenbaum said the study used the New York Public Schools' definition of at-risk students: "reading levels between 25-50 percentile, a history of truancy, and moving a lot from one place to another. The students were selected at random from this pool. We also had a control group," she said, of at-risk students who didn't get the technology. "There isn't much known of how these students respond to electronic communities, and electronic learning.

"Many of these students were functionally illiterate, from homes that were functionally illiterate. They didn't read well or write well," she continued. "We had so much success that NYNEX extended the computers in the home funding. We place telecommunications in the homes of these students, and the student became the teacher of the others. We provided training for the student, and caretakers if they chose.

"With the students in the home, the goal was to motivate them to remain in school," and empower them. "We responded to the students, not the reverse. We initiated the program primarily through games we thought were educational, and chat. They'd talk to each other even if they didn't know each other -- they were the same age. The curriculum piece with those students was to tutor them in areas where they were failing, and they got to keep the hardware if they remained in the program. The program wasn't curriculum-based -- it was supporting a desire to learn.

"The second part of the program, which NYNEX has just funded, allows us to have a seven-year study tutoring and mentoring students over the network. NYNEX has offered scholarship assistance into college. We're trying to get these students into college. Our program is now geared toward the curriculum, and we're bringing on teacher-tutors and mentors in the community. We think this is going to be a very interesting, innovative program."

The results of the study should give new hope to inner-city school systems. "I don't think the school system is aware of what these students can achieve. We just need to find new ways to reach them. Most schools don't have telecommunications or teachers who know how to use it. We're not talking about computers. We're talking about networked learning communities."

In addition to the student study, there was a study of teachers. "We put the equipment into teachers' homes, trained them, and told them that when they were comfortable we'd put it in the classroom. We asked them to create curriculum that would support learning in their classrooms, in any area. That's been not quite as successful. None of the teachers wanted the computers out of their homes -- we had to buy clones for the classroom. Then we found that because most teachers had no experience with telecommunications, it takes more support from the system" to get results. "We're developing a new program based on that, using a Merrill Lynch $100,000 planning grant. It's a professional development program. We want them to learn to use the computer as a tool, something the teacher can use so they can help kids learn."

Newsbytes asked about the impact of all this on the curriculum. "We're not going to rewrite the curriculum," she said. "What we're doing is helping teachers understand the concepts we want conveyed, through the curriculum. And we support them with this software, a resource that will help the teacher take the class through the learning experience. It encourages collaborative learning, with the teacher becoming the facilitator. It's not standing up in front of the classroom and talking." Of course, "We hope we can influence change in the curriculum" as teachers learn what they can do with the technology to change learning from an industrial model to a post-industrial model. The catch- phrase here is "out with the sage on the stage, in with the guide on the side."

Newsbytes asked Birenbaum about the center. "We're a public policy center. Part of our objective is educational change. We're not in the business of running programs. We create demonstration models from which we can step back. We target policy issues and try to influence policy-makers in school systems, government and funding agencies to realize there can be new ways to look at how learning can occur in our schools. You have to do these studies or you're not taken seriously -- if it's all anecdotal it won't influence. You have to do this well, then you can influence. It isn't obvious to the policy makers, or they'd be more responsive to allowing large urban school systems to buy the technology and do the programs. We have to collaborate with the private sector because the budget isn't there for the hardware. Once we convince the systems they need this, they'll use the budgets they have to make the purchase."

On funding technology, "They don't look at it as books, paper,

and pencil yet. We're saying technology should be as integral as books, paper, pencil, and blackboards. And in the public school system it's the government that makes the budget."

Newsbytes asked about the impact of all this on efforts to make education more multicultural. "In history, social studies and geographies you can see different cultures, and ways of living. You can see how people can live among each other. There are programs where you can be networked to other kids, in Costa Rica and Moscow. It's very exciting. Then the school teaches them about these other students. If these kids can get experiences and understand experiences, they'll change." (Dana Blankenhorn/19940630/Press Contact: CUNY, Christy DeBoe Hicks, 212/642-2634; NYNEX, John Bonomo, 212/395-0500)

Editorial - Feds Slap Down Free Enterprise Again

07/20/94 DENVER, COLORADO, U.S.A., 1994 JUL 20 (NB) -- By Jim Mallory, Midwest Bureau Chief. Federal regulators have done it again -- telling a company, in this case Microsoft, how to run their business.

Unless you live in a cave somewhere in Tibet you know by now that the business cops in our nation's capital used their muscle this week to make Microsoft, one of the most successful businesses in modern history, change their operating system pricing structure and tear up the non-disclosure agreements with competitors that specify what the competitor can do with the privileged information they are provided by Microsoft.

So what, you say? Well, put yourself in Microsoft's shoes. Suppose you're a widget company that has grown from nothing to a multi-billion dollar worldwide enterprise, with your stock selling for over $50 per share. Suddenly, due only to the carping of your competitors, you're told by the federal gumshoes that you have to reduce the price of your widgets. During the second World War that was known as price controls.

The folks in the trenchcoats also tell you it's a no-no to limit how your competitors can use the proprietary information you provide them that lets their widgets interface with your widgets, which is an advantage to the consumer since they can buy anyone's widgets and know they will work together.

That's what the Department of Justice has done to Microsoft. It wasn't the PC makers that were complaining about how Microsoft priced its operating system MS-DOS. It was the competitors, mostly Novell.

Ironically, there are numerous similarities between Novell and Microsoft. Both publish operating systems and network software. Novell is very successful with its NetWare network operating system while Microsoft has had little luck with its LAN Manager. Microsoft has been hugely successful with the MS-DOS operating system while Novell couldn't get the public to accept DR-DOS, even though it does some things MS-DOS doesn't.

Also ironically, the whole thing doesn't mean a thing to the consuming public. Microsoft says the difference in cost to the OEM (original equipment manufacturer) will be about $0.50 more per machine under the new "per system" pricing rather than the "per processor" method previously used by most OEMs.

If you prefer DR-DOS (recently renamed) or Unix as your operating system of choice, you can have it. In some cases it may cost you extra, and that's the crux of Novell's complaint. They believe the automatic installation of MS-DOS on nearly every PC shipped gives Microsoft an advantage over its competitors since the customer is in effect paying twice for an operating system.

However, some companies offer the consumer a choice. Compaq Computer Corporation ships several operating systems on CD-ROM disks with some of its servers and lets the user choose which one to install using an installation routine called "SmartStart."

So if the Justice-Microsoft "agreement" probably won't have any noticeable effect on the end user, why all the hue and cry? Because it's another government intrusion into the free enterprise system. And when that happens, it always costs the consumer money.

Microsoft has to send reports to Justice to prove they are complying. Microsoft spent millions of dollars to provide information to the government during its investigation. The government spend untold dollars to investigate Microsoft. And since all successful companies pass along all costs to the consumer, guess who ends up paying all those dollars.

Apparently the feds didn't learn anything from the results of the AT&T breakup. The Baby Bells that were created, like mercury in a dish of water, will re-assemble themselves. And consumers will use the computer software that does the job for them best regardless of what Uncle Sam says. (Jim Mallory/19940719)

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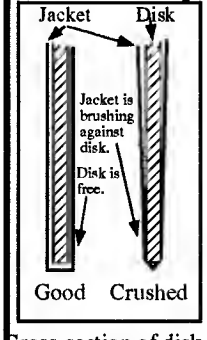

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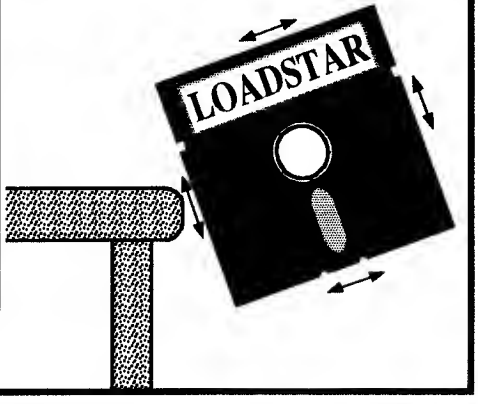

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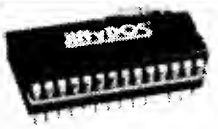

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Increase Speed Up to 1500% while retaining 100% compatibility

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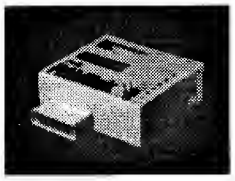
3.2 and 1.6 MB 3.5" Floppy Drives

The FD-2000 and FD-4000 disk drives utilize today's latest 3.5 inch disk drive technology. FD-2000's support 800K (1581 style) and 1.6 MB (High Density) formats, while the FD-4000 also offers support for the 3.2 MB (Enhanced Density) disk format. Fast and reliable, they support 1541, 1571 and 1581 style partitions, Native Mode partitioning and can actually read and write 1581 disks. FD's feature built-in JiffyDOS, SWAP button and optional Real Time Clock. High capacity, speed and compatibility make the FD right for every application, including GEOS.



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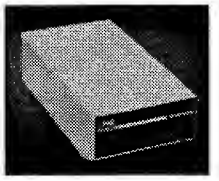
The fastest possible form of storage, RAMLink provides instant access to files and retains data while your computer i turned off. Easy to use and expandable up to 16 MB, RAMLink utilizes the same powerful operating system found in CMD Hard Drives. Unlike Commodore REU's which are compatible with less than 1% of commercial software, RAMLink supports more than 80% of the commercial titles. RAMLink also offers built-in JiffyDOS Kernal, SWAP feature, reset button, enable/disable switch, pass-thru port and RAM port for REU/GEORAM use. RAMLink offers maximum speed, expandability and compatibility with all types of software and hardware including GEOS.

HD Series



SCSI Hard Drive for the C-64/128

HD Series Hard Drives are available in capacities up to 1 GB, are fully partitionable, and can emulate 1541, 1571, & 1581 disks while Native partitions utilize MSDOS-style subdirectories. HD's connect easily to the serial bus or parallel via RAMLink. Includes built-in JiffyDOS, SWAP feature and RTC. HD's offer superior compatibility with most commercial software including BBS, Productivity and GEOS. And with new pricing, HD Series drives offer the lowest cost per megabyte of any C64/128 storage device.

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